

# Introduction: Roots and Branches

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Why should I act ethically? How does this require me to act in a given situation – and what tells me that I have it right? These questions sit at the heart of most faith traditions, and Islam is no exception. Much of the Quran and the traditions linked to it are about these questions. Schools of law, philosophy and theology in classical Islam grappled mightily with them. In our time, the challenges of modernity have plenty to do with the answers we offer. This second volume in the Muslim Heritage Series is about the roots of Islam's ethical framework and how its teachings have branched out in the social and religious lives of Muslims past and present. We look too at how these roots and branches might give sustenance for journeys that lie ahead.

Taking ethics seriously means coming to terms with the real world where our sense of right and wrong plays out. Societies have devised complex theories about what is right and what is good, in keeping with Socrates' advice that the unexamined life is not worth living. Faith traditions at their best want philosophy to face the details of daily life – and daily life to face the tests of philosophy. Otherwise, we have what Abdolkarim Soroush calls an 'ethics of the gods' which is beyond the reach of mortals. Such an ethics may serve well enough in mythology or metaphysics. But like all communities of faith, the Muslim umma came into being not as an abstract ideal but an effort to live out its values as everyday reality.

'Let there be among you', proclaims the Quran, 'a community

that calls to the good (*al-khayr*), bidding virtue (*maruf*) and forbidding vice (*munkar*)' (3:104). Rooted in *arafa*, that which is known or familiar, *maruf* signifies the transparency of the virtues. They are accessible to all who care to make the effort, with an abundance of guidance from scripture; which also means there is no easy escape from responsibility. It is not the Prophet Muhammad alone for whom Quranic ethics is attainable, but all persons 'possessed of minds' (40:53–4). Belief is constantly coupled with 'good works' (e.g. 2:25), so the practice of ethics is central to one's identity as a member of the umma.

This chapter is a sketch of the ethical venture of Islam from its beginnings to the continuities that make up the rest of this volume. If ethics governs all of one's life, secular and religious, then values and principles must constantly be interpreted to reach an appropriate result. Does this make ethics into law that is binding in the name of a community of virtue? If law and ethics are so closely related, where does this leave one's choice about how to live the good life? Without choice, can there be responsibility for one's actions? If ethics is not binding in the same way as law, how has the difference played out in principle and practice? Islam's foundational phase had much to say on these matters, and history offers a rich array of interpretations of that teaching.

## Roots

As the primary guide for Muslims, the Quran sets the tone for its moral universe in holding believing men and women as 'protective friends' who advocate the good (9:71). Belief is attached to behaviour, the individual to the community and, as noted earlier, the 'good' should be familiar to all. Justice, beneficence and charity are defining values, as against behaviour that brings shame or blame (16:90). Yet scripture is ultimately about character rather than abstract values.

There are over 200 references in the Quran to the sense of divine presence or *taqwa* that shapes the believer's conduct toward fellow human beings and God. It is what motivates one's integrity and forbearance in the face of adversity (2:177). Such forbearance

or *hilm*, derived from one of the scriptural names of the divine, *al-Halim* (the Forbearing One), is essential not only in moral character but in the overall teaching:

In a certain sense the Koran as a whole is dominated by the very spirit of *hilm*. The constant exhortation to kindness (*ihsan*) in human relations, the emphasis laid on justice (*adl*), the forbidding of wrongful violence (*zulm*), the bidding of abstinence and control of passions, the criticism of groundless pride and arrogance – all are concrete manifestations of this spirit of *hilm*.<sup>1</sup>

This applies no less to how one ‘forbids vice’; doing so in ways that violate this spirit of *hilm* can make the response itself a vice, whatever the righteous tone.

Virtue rests on choices that are made in light of the Revelation and the capacity for discernment with which human beings are endowed. Believers are those ‘whom God has guided, and they are the possessors of minds’ (39:17–18). This is not unique to Muslims: ‘Formerly We gave guidance to Moses, and bequeathed to the Israelites the Book as guidance and a reminder to men possessed of minds’ (40:53–4). Yet humans are seen as inclined to wayward passion or *al-hawa*, the kind of arbitrary behaviour that leads to egoism, error and worse. The story of Adam and Eve is perhaps the most dramatic instance; Adam finally comes to terms with his heedlessness, and is able to gain redemption (2:31–8).

Humans are not held accountable for wrongs without prior guidance. ‘We never punish until we have sent a Messenger’ (17:15), who serves as a ‘reminder’ of truths and virtues. Further, there is an abundance of ‘signs’ or *ayat* in nature (2:164, 10:5–6, 3:190) as well as in the Revelation which is evidence of its purpose, to be discerned by those with reason or *aql*. That *ayat* is also the term for verses in the Quran only underscores the fullness of this communication. Time and again, humans are exhorted to use

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<sup>1</sup> Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo, 1964), p.216; see also his *Ethico-Legal Concepts in the Qur’an* (Montreal, 2002).

their senses and wits in discerning what should be obvious. Muhammad emerges as an exemplar heedful of the signs, and willing to use good sense in daily encounters. After all, he is called on to make quick judgements in the spirit of the scripture without the benefit of 'commands' for each situation. He chides preachers and the flock for treating animals without proper sensitivity; he is unhappy with a companion for wasting water during ablutions; he comforts a sick woman who has habitually abused him; and gives lavish praise for the charity of a farmer who shares a few dates. When told of the pious qualities of a Muslim, he interrupts with, 'But how is his reason?' As the praise continues to flow, he repeats 'How is his reason?' until the message gets through.

Broadly, it is 'exalted character' (68:4) that the Quran commends in Muhammad, just as it does in recounting the struggles of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Joseph and Mary. This is cast as a *human* striving, and the more heroic for that. In this, Muhammad combines what Max Weber famously saw in *The Sociology of Religion* (1922) as the two alternative roles of prophets – 'ethical' figures conveying the will of God, or 'exemplary' figures who taught by their own actions. Hence, the believer is urged to 'strive, as in a race in all virtues' (5:48). Commentators often note that the Quran is not a textbook of law or religious doctrine, where systems of conduct and belief are laid out in an analytical framework. It is a call to human betterment in which the lyrical language of the text is 'a rich and subtle stimulus to religious imagination.'<sup>2</sup>

To the questions 'What should I do?' and 'Why should I do it?', the reply is an appeal to what one can discern from the evidence of creation and the record of man's encounter with the Creator. The appeal is to an intuitive sense of what is right and good, with broad guiding principles and examples. There are reminders of the limits of human knowing and wisdom, and the folly of ignoring this. 'We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it'; 'foolish' man, on the other

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<sup>2</sup> George Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge, 1985), p.56.

hand, accepted (33:72). Humans have the burden that goes with choosing what they do. ‘Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject’ (18:29) makes the choice stark.

But one is accountable only for one’s own actions (2:286). The weight of individual action is tied to one’s intention, in the light of *taqwa*, the consciousness of divine presence; but the constant stress on reason or *aql* means that choices must be informed and thoughtful. Poor choices are tied to a heedless attitude that fuels ‘appetites unchecked by knowledge’ (6:119). Good choices come from a character that cultivates the virtues of mind, body and spirit, for there are countless practical situations that require sound judgement, compared to the specific ‘rules’ about what to do.

Knowledge, even from scripture, needs reasoned engagement of intellect and faith. ‘The Quran speaks only if you ask it to speak’, observed Ali b. Abi Talib (c. 598–661), companion, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet.<sup>3</sup> It was from engagement with scripture that we got the body of practical ethics we know as the sharia, and its more juristic offshoot, the *fiqh*. Since there are limits to what mortals can know, humility is called for, along with divine grace without which, finally, ‘there is no light’ (24:40). So with knowledge and reason, coupled with the grace of a higher wisdom, one may grasp the teaching and what it implies. The need for such grace is unsurprising: the point is not only to edify but to urge good choices. It brings us back to character-in-action as the core of the teaching, and the community as a vehicle through which it is to be realised.

## The Setting

Traits of character or *akhlaq* as the essence of Muslim ethics was an idea at home in the social setting of the Revelation. A pre-Islamic social code of dignity was shared by the peoples of Arabia and the surrounding region, binding personal honour to that of

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<sup>3</sup> Fazlur Rahman, ‘Law and Ethics in Islam’, in R.G. Hovannisian, ed., *Ethics in Islam* (Malibu, CA, 1985), p.14.

the family and the tribe or community. This was *adab*, which prized the cultivation of civility and refinement – but also courage, generosity and hospitality to the stranger. *Adab* came from *maduba*, a nourishing feast, which evolved into the sense of a proper disposition of the mind and self (*adab al-nafs*). A person with *adab* would know the value of a generous display of gratitude to a benefactor, for example, since a moral debt must be suitably repaid. One may see an extension of this ethic in the believer's gratitude to God in the Quran, which serves to bind together the community.

If *adab* called for steady cultivation, *akhlaq* was an innate or habitual leaning to virtue. The two terms were intimately bound, evoking a disciplined way of being and living. In this regard, they were close to a Mediterranean body of thought, notably that of the Greeks. The Hellenic *ethikos* stood for custom, and in the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus which were to deeply influence Muslim thinkers, the ideal was to nurture familiar traits of character. This could lead to excellence and happiness or *eudaimonia*; it required learning to steer a middle way, 'the golden mean', in making moral choices. These views were themselves shaped by Egyptian, Indian and Perso-Zoroastrian ideas. In any case, the pursuit of the golden mean also became a virtue for the Muslim umma as seekers of a 'balanced path' (2:143).

Many of these cultural influences were absorbed through the theologies and practices of the various Jewish and Christian communities of the region. After all, there was routine contact not only with priests and rabbis but also ordinary members of those diverse communities whose traditions had crystallised around specific monotheistic tenets. Their legitimacy as the 'religion of Abraham' was affirmed in the Quran (2:130), and Muhammad brought but a 'confirmation of prior scriptures' (12:111). The 'people of the book' (*ahl al-kitab*), then, shared the essential values from which Muslim ethics were to develop. A key aspect of these Abrahamic values was reciprocity, also found in other great traditions: treat others as you would expect them to treat you (Matthew 7:12, Leviticus 19:18). Muhammad was to put it thus: 'None of

you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the practices that were associated with pre-Islamic ways were less than salutary. These included infanticide, the abuse of slaves and prisoners of war, loose marriage arrangements, quick recourse to violence in resolving disputes, and highly exploitative commercial dealings. True, such practices could be the subject of local reproof and correction. For instance, the Quraysh clans in Mecca formed an alliance (*hilf al-fudul*) to make their city a 'fair trade area' by ensuring that if anyone were wronged in commerce, the alliance would side with the victim regardless of the offender. When a local merchant of the Sahm clan of the Quraysh failed to pay a visiting Yemeni of the Zubayd clan his due, the alliance leaned on the Sahmi to do the proper thing.<sup>5</sup> But such responses were ad hoc and driven by practicality, usually tied to the notion of 'honour'.

Individuals mattered less than the group; both were ranked by status based on descent and power. Women were entirely unequal in law, whether in inheritance, legal capacity or marriage. Polygamy, concubinage, unrestricted divorce and segregation were common. There were Egyptian and other Arab tribes, some of them matrilineal, that treated women better. Infanticide came from Greek times and was approved by Roman law, notably when it came to females. Judeo-Christian reforms left intact a world-view with the support of theology in which women were morally and socially inferior. This is evident in Augustine's writings, and even more in those of Tertullian (c. 160–220), 'father of Latin Christianity', on women: '*You* are the Devil's gateway. *You* are the unsealer of the forbidden tree. *You* are the first deserter of the divine Law. *You* are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image,

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<sup>4</sup> *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, tr. E. Ibrahim and D. Johnson-Davies (Cambridge, 1997), hadith 13; also cited in *Sahih Bukhari*, Book 2:6:13.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), p.565.

man. On account of *your* desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die.<sup>6</sup>

Such was the ethos of the eastern Mediterranean world where Muhammad was tasked to deliver the Quranic message. There were practices that had to promptly cease and some that would take longer, yet others that would stand as discouraged. Many of the ways of *adab* and Judeo-Christian teaching were given fresh meaning. Charity, courage and generosity were raised to a plane of commitment to serve the welfare of the umma, whose solidarity extended to Christians and Jews in the Constitution of Medina (623). Membership in the community ranked above tribe or social class. Familial roles such as those of parents, spouses, guardians and siblings entailed specific ethical duties; and there were special duties toward orphans, the disabled, the poor and travellers. Again, this nourished an ethic of solidarity.

But moral accountability was made firmly *individual*. The language of the Quran stresses this not only in matters of faith but also of social obligation, as does the Prophet when he calls even his companions to account for their actions. Equality becomes a premier value and is affirmed as a universal ethic: 'We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you' (49:13). Individual virtue is linked with a duty of care toward the Other. Muhammad appealed to a social conscience in asserting, 'the best Islam is that you feed the hungry and spread peace among those whom you know and those you do not know.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Ruether, 'Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church', in R. Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York, 1974), p.157; see also James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), pp.85–6.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in *Sahih Bukhari*, Book 2:5:12.



## Taking Ethics Seriously

How was the community to put the foundational teaching into practice? Several responses ensued during and after Muhammad's lifetime. What it meant to be a Muslim as expressed in the 'pillars of the faith' embodied key ethical duties. The most obvious was the rendering of alms or *zakat*, a form of organised charity for the common welfare. Generosity in giving was likened to planting in fertile soil, where the harvest was greater than the sowing – and a counter to avarice and usury. But there was also a deeper basis, of purifying one's wealth in atonement and gratitude. As such, *zakat* is obligatory for the believer; the poorest too could make a gesture of giving with the proper intention. *Zakat* was to evolve into a voluntary 'tax' for the public good, with formal rules for its calculation. A variant of this kind of giving was the *waqf* or endowment to establish institutions like hospitals, schools and mosques, with trustees to ensure continuity.

Other pillars of faith, like fasting during the month of Ramadan, also involved ethical commitments. Abstaining from food was a mark of solidarity with the hungry as well as an act of self-discipline or *adab al-nafs*. The annual pilgrimage or hajj marked the equality of all believers and needed high discipline in the journey and the rites. What were the proprieties on how to conduct them? On matters like marriage, divorce, contracts, inheritance, the limits of warfare, and the observance of the fast and of prayers, the Quran has a fair amount of 'technical' detail. It is also direct on behaviour such as wanton killing and infanticide, abuse of trusteeship (especially over orphans), adultery, theft, wasting natural resources and intoxication. Again, women are given formal legal capacity, rights to inherit and to fair treatment in marriage; hence they enjoy full moral equality with men, as well as exclusive rights over property brought into and acquired during marriage, against any claim by the husband. The radical shift from pre-Islamic ways is obvious.

But on these and other matters, there was room for interpretation on the details. Muhammad's daily encounters became the source of the hadith or traditions that helped to map out the

ethos, with the endorsement of scripture (59:7, 33:21). His companions, four of whom ascended to the governance of the community from 632 to 661, also played a vital role. For the rest, it was left to a new class of theologians and jurists to develop the foundations as they applied to the warp and woof of daily living. Thus was born the sharia, literally ‘the way’. The particulars of the way were the result of human endeavour, though the quest was felt to be guided by a superior Intellect:

That ‘God does not know particulars’, as the Hellenized philosophers claimed, was for Muslim jurists and thinkers not only unthinkable but also a form of complex ignorance, for such a scenario would have left man to his own devices, where no law or deterrence, moral or otherwise, may be possible . . . The bottom line here is that no man, however wise, rational or otherwise ‘philosophically predisposed’, can rule the lives of his fellow men or dictate to them the terms of a good life . . . [W]hat is it that makes our ways of living good or bad, sound or unsound, destructive or healthy? To know all this is to listen to a higher voice, but to listen and understand is to interpret, and to interpret is to be engaged with God and his Speech.<sup>8</sup>

Within this moral universe, human acts are either about social affairs and relationships (*muamalat*) or about how we relate to the divine (*ibadat*). Both kinds of acts came to be classified in the sharia under one of five categories: obligatory, recommended, neutral, discouraged or prohibited. ‘Obligatory’ acts include *zakat*, fasting and prescribed prayers, while adultery, theft and intoxication are ‘prohibited’; freeing slaves is ‘recommended’, while wasting scarce resources like water is ‘discouraged’. There is fluidity to this schema which is moral/theological in the first place, and from which legal inferences are drawn. What is unlawful is sinful. Guilt and punishment are tied to intent and remorse, with plenty of scope to mitigate the seriousness of an offence. Only the gravest

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<sup>8</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharia: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge, 2009), p.83.

of acts may incur harsh penalties (*hadd*) appropriate to the time, such as flogging or the amputation of a hand, where the standard of evidence was rigorous from the outset.

By making the newly developing body of law accountable to ethical criteria, the risk of purely arbitrary measures of convenience or propriety was reduced. So was the prospect of an unfiltered borrowing of rules from the many prior codes, secular and religious, in the domain of *muamalat*. In some cases, such borrowings might be entirely sensible, as in matters of commerce and administration. But the radical reform of family law as well as aspects of public law could hardly be sustained without tying it to the new ethos. The risk of 'default' borrowing from assorted quarters only grew with the rapid expansion of the nascent Muslim community outside its heartland in Mecca and Medina. The outlying regions of Persia, Syria and Egypt, among others, had far more elaborate legal codes with legacies dating back to Justinian and Hammurabi. Their incorporation in the Arab empire put a premium on the rule of law – which meant quickly developing the sharia for such settings. Indigenous rules were retained where they did not offend the basics of sharia ethics; non-Muslim communities could keep most of their personal law.

All in all, the legal rules of the *fiqh* were gaining priority. The *fiqh* laid claim to legitimacy on the basis of scriptural foundations as well as ethical teaching. But the 'schools of law' that now emerged were writing manuals with rules that reached into life's every nook and cranny. While 'the paramount valuation of human conduct was moral, not legal', notes Fazlur Rahman, '*fiqh* and sharia became generally equated with specific rules'.<sup>9</sup> Everyday practicality was winning out over the theology, though tribunals could resort to informal principles of equity in settling some types of grievances (*mazalim*).

At the same time, other articulations on taking ethics seriously had emerged. Notably, there was the letter of instruction on civil justice by Ali b. Abi Talib as caliph, addressed to his

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<sup>9</sup> 'Law and Ethics in Islam', p.5.

appointee in 658 as governor of Egypt, Malik al-Ashtar.<sup>10</sup> It spells out the nature of a ‘social contract’ on the basis of a commitment to justice as an overriding virtue – building on the spirit of the Medina constitution that Muhammad had negotiated in 623. Governance in the new empire was marked by episodes of arbitrary power, nepotism, unreasonable tax burdens on farmers and misuse of public funds. The caliph set out in specific terms to reaffirm key values: the governor must recognise the poor as ‘most in need of justice’, his relatives should receive no favours, he must appoint judges and administrators solely on merit, avoid unfair taxation and account fully for state revenues. He was to consult widely, rule ‘with the agreement of the people’ and resist the claim that ‘I have been given authority, I order and am obeyed’. Lapses on the part of others deserved compassion. Ultimately, the practice and precept of justice were guided by *taqwa*, which is neither about fear nor desire for reward but the ‘worship of the free’.

We have, then, an articulation of civil ethics in which accountability, integrity and fair play are also measures of religiosity. It should come as no surprise that the modernist Egyptian jurist and chief mufti, Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), published a commentary lauding Ali’s letter as instructive for our own time. The letter also reinforced the idea that for the ruler and the ruled alike, a commitment to practical ethics is less about compliance with a code than the cultivation of character, *akhlaq*. This was a more reliable guide to choices about right and wrong. Further, in his insistence that *taqwa* as well as love underlies the ideal of justice as a pervasive secular and spiritual value, Ali influenced the Sufi traditions in Islam. Stressing inward aspects of character as the key to sound choices, Sufi discourses took especially seriously the virtues of *hilm* and *ihsan* in grasping the deeper truths of an ethical life.

In the teaching of Harith al-Muhasibi (781–857) in Baghdad,

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<sup>10</sup> Letter 33, *Nahj al-balagha*, tr. Sayid Ali Reza as *Peak of Eloquence* (New York, 1996), pp.534–49; analysis in Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Justice and Remembrance* (London, 2006).

where he was to mentor theologians and mystics alike, the linkage of inward and practical virtue is fully evident in his *Treatise for the Seekers of Guidance*. The train of thought was earlier evident in Hasan al-Basri (643–728), one of the founding figures of a pietist rationalism that sought ‘justice’ in all its varied meanings. This led Abu Nasr al-Farabi (c. 870–950) to a strikingly imagined ‘virtuous city’ (*al-Madina al-fadila*) where civil and spiritual pursuits are in fine harmony. Al-Farabi was much inspired by Plato’s *Republic*, but his ethics of character and leadership is also tied to a faith sensibility among rulers and ruled. This mix was to find elaboration in *The Criterion of Moral Action* of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), who as we shall see leaned heavily on the pietist side. By contrast, Farid al-Din Attar gave the mix an enchanting form in his epic poem *The Conference of the Birds*, a journey into the far reaches of the self and beyond.

A distinctively Muslim ethics, then, emerged across frontiers. Scripture, prophetic traditions, pre-Islamic *adab* and Mediterranean systems of law and thought, all fed into a fresh synthesis of theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, spirituality and more. If taking ethics seriously meant attending to the sharia, its details were but a part of the picture. What the Quran had to say on the pursuit of the good could hardly be exhausted by a code that was the outcome of daily human struggles with moral problems. Yet scripture and hadith left much to fill in when it came to the answers. In taking up the challenge, Muslims had to respond to some fundamental issues:

How should legitimate authority and leadership be exercised after the Prophet?

What was the scope of human free will in relation to the divine?

Was human reason a reliable means to steer through moral complexity?

It is to the diverse responses to these questions that we turn next.

## Branches

With the Prophet's passing in 632, fateful choices lay ahead. For purposes of governance, a hard compromise was reached among most Muslim communities that would see leading figures in Muhammad's life take the helm. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali served as the 'rightly-guided' caliphs until 661, with both religious and secular authority. A decree on rules of war by Abu Bakr, for example, sought to uphold the spirit of the Quran:

Do not act treacherously . . . Do not mutilate; do not kill children or old men, or women; do not cut off the heads of the palm-trees or burn them; do not cut down the fruit trees; do not slaughter a sheep or a cow or a camel, except for food. You will pass by people who devote their lives in cloisters; leave them and their devotions alone. You will come upon people who bring you platters in which are various sorts of food; if you eat any of it, mention the name of God over it.<sup>11</sup>

At other times, the mix of pragmatism and piety yielded less worthy results. In the so-called Wars of Apostasy (*Rida*), Abu Bakr firmly cast all dissent as a revolt against God. This had a lasting impact on readings of Islamic law, with the idea that leaving the faith amounted to punishable apostasy; yet the Quran clearly taught, 'Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error' (2:256). Or consider Uthman's decision to appoint his Meccan kinsmen to key administrative posts across the domains. This ran against the grain of the 'Islamic' ethos that Umar, his predecessor, had pursued over the old tribal one; the ensuing civil strife cost Uthman his life and spilled over into the caliphate of Ali.

It was one thing for worldly and religious authority to be coupled in the Prophet, who after all had the approval of scripture. Could such authority be based on the political compromises that allowed

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<sup>11</sup> J. Alden Williams, ed. *Themes of Islamic Civilization* (Berkeley, CA, 1971), p.262.

the early caliphs to govern? The issue was more troubling as the challenges of ruling over a vastly expanded umma piled up. It became obvious that such power must be tempered by the authority of the sharia. By the time leadership passed to Islam's first 'dynasty' of Quraysh clansmen who came to be known as the Umayyads (661–750), legitimate authority in matters of faith could hardly be asserted by the caliph. As we have seen, the greater the need for particulars in the sharia, the stronger the sway of *fiqh* – binding as law with a sacred aura. What followed was a flourishing of schools of law or *madhhabs*, with a sophisticated science of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) coming to the fore by the late eighth century. The many and varied *madhhabs* eventually rallied around four major ones, each named after a leading jurist: Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki and Shafii. Those who espoused this approach to building on the 'tradition of the Prophet' or *sunna* came to be identified as 'Sunni' Muslims.

For many others in the umma, Muhammad had not left the issue of authority open to political negotiation at all. Rather, on his very last pilgrimage and in the presence of numerous witnesses (including the Prophet's companions), he made clear his choice of Ali as the next leader.<sup>12</sup> The merits and legitimacy of that designation were a *moral* issue with implications for the nature of leadership. While the precise scope of the implications in theology, law and practice would unfold over time, this much was clear: the rightful leaders after the Prophet were imams who had more than mere political authority in continuing the original teaching. This was the perspective of the Shia or 'partisans of Ali'. A school of law named after the Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (c. 702–765) emerged as dominant in the Shia tradition; the Jafari *madhhab* recognises the central role of the imam of the time or, in his absence, those who represent him. There were other Muslim communities who also parted with the 'majoritarian' Sunni consensus, such as the Kharijites and some Sufi persuasions.

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<sup>12</sup> L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Ghadir Khumm' (site of Muhammad's pronouncement), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb et al. (rev. ed., Leiden, 1965), vol. 2, pp.993–4.

Whether in the larger communities of interpretation, the many spiritual orders (*tariqas*) or the diverse *madhhabs*, ‘Islam’ was very much a pluralist idea and practice from the earliest days. It would be surprising if this were not reflected in the ways in which ethics was to develop, often but not necessarily along the lines of sectarian or legal affiliation. Regional and social factors were also to shape choices – in gender relations, health care, ecological sensitivity and social proprieties. For example, with regard to the ethics of figural depiction in public places, including art, there was much latitude allowed in the near eastern and Asian milieus of Shia Safavids as well as Sunni Ottomans and Mughals. A less generous view prevailed in the more conservative societies of Arabia and the Maghreb for a variety of reasons, as shown in Fahmida Suleman’s chapter in this volume.

But in the approach to core issues of moral responsibility, the paths taken were much affected by theology and law. These differences were to gain weight with the absorption of Hellenic writing. As fine translations in Baghdad of Aristotle’s ethics and other works became available in the ninth century, a fresh intellectual current was unleashed. Ibn Miskawayh (c. 932–1030) wrote his landmark *The Cultivation of Morals*, al-Kindi (c. 801–873), al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (c. 980–1037) offered new scientific and philosophical ideas, while Abd al-Jabbar (c. 935–1025) championed a rationalist theology that al-Ghazali sought to counter – and thus inspired a famous retort from Ibn Rushd (c. 1126–1189). At the heart of these works were debates about moral agency as against predestination, and about reason and tradition as sources of our values. The outcomes would shape how the Quran, sharia and *fiqh* were understood both by scholars and ordinary Muslims, and hence mould the practice of ethics.

## Human Capacity and Revelation

How do we know right from wrong? What is it that makes something ‘good’ or ‘evil’? The answers for one of Islam’s founding jurists, al-Shafii (c. 767–820), were ultimately quite plain. Revelation and its favoured interpreters, the prophets, were the source of



moral values; they gave us the guidance we required. It was the task of law only to infer the details which filled the sharia and *fiqh*; too much speculation on these matters was a distraction from good practice. Shafii was committed enough to the quest for truth to insist that a jurist must change his ruling (*fatwa*) in the face of facts, but this did not allow one to look far beyond them. If I buy a dagger from a man whom I witnessed using it as a murder weapon, the contract of sale is perfectly valid. What counts is the form of the transaction; the inner workings are for God.

Some *madhhabs* were more willing to go beyond the form of the law and allow conjecture on what was in the public interest (*maslaha*) to influence a ruling. The Maliki jurist al-Shatibi was to draw out the terms under which public interest could overrule the strict rules of *fiqh*, as long as the sharia's 'higher objectives' (*maqasid*) were intact. Still, even in the eclectic social milieu of Andalusia in the 14th century, al-Shatibi held to the view that Revelation and prophetic tradition were the sole source of truth:

If reason is permitted to transcend the source of revelation, it would then be permissible to invalidate Sharia by means of reason – an inconceivable possibility. The very meaning of Sharia is to ordain for the subjects certain limits pertaining to their acts, pronouncements and beliefs . . . If reason is permitted to overstep one of these limits, then it can overstep all others, for what is good for one thing is good for that which is analogous to it.<sup>13</sup>

The tension between the truth of tradition and the claims of reason had earlier troubled al-Ghazali, and led him also to ponder the sharia's deeper purposes. He tells us, for example, of hearing that a disciple of the jurist Abu Hanifa evaded the payment of *zakat* by transferring to his wife the property on which it would have been due, and that she then did likewise; when this was reported to Abu Hanifa, he dismissed the matter on the grounds

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<sup>13</sup> Hallaq, *Sharia*, p.512.

that the disciple was only exercising his rights. Al-Ghazali agreed with Abu Hanifa, who like Shafii is said to have turned down the caliph's offer of an appointment to a senior post on grounds of conscience. Whatever it was these jurists were upholding in the name of divine truth, it could hardly be the legal *fiqh*. We are back with sharia as a body of ethical tenets, beyond law as commonly understood. Yet if the sources were to be interpreted, how certain could we be (beyond the most direct commands) of getting this right? How much freedom did we have here? Could it be the divine will playing itself out through what we imagine is our action? Debates on these ideas were intense when Shafii and his fellow jurists founded their schools of law.

Two sharply varied perspectives were at stake. For one group, the Mutazilites, moral action meant human capacity and responsibility in the shadow of Revelation; the Asharites, on the other hand, saw divine command as the only legitimate basis for both truth and action. Ideas such as 'good', 'evil', 'justice' and 'obligation' had moral content for the Mutazilites outside of scripture, and the content could be grasped by reason. Indeed, this was why scripture could effectively use those terms, and appeal to our reason to grasp the plentiful 'signs' of divine presence. As Abd al-Jabbar put it:

[W]e say that revelation does not necessitate the evilness or goodness of anything, it only uncovers the character of the act by way of indication, just as reason does, and distinguishes between the command of the Exalted and that of another being by His wisdom, Who never commands what it is evil to command.<sup>14</sup>

This 'objective' view of ethics was wedded to the premise that divine command was not arbitrary but rational and good. Since humans had the capacity for both reason and virtue, they were fully accountable for drawing on them as well as on Revelation.

For the Asharites, all this was heresy in giving no more value to Revelation than to human reason. All earthly action was possible

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<sup>14</sup> Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, p.104.

only by divine grace and God was not subject to our categories of value; on the contrary, ideas of 'good' and 'evil' are the result purely of divine will. In this 'theistic subjective' view of ethics, it falls to us simply to acknowledge what is divinely ordained. Yet if our actions are predetermined, can we be held accountable for them? Ashari (c. 873–935) replied that God actually creates all possible acts, but humans 'acquire' specific ones by choosing them (*kasb*); this is what makes us morally responsible. What the Asharites – who included Shafii – did was to buttress the claim of the *madhhabs* that the sharia and *fiqh* they were developing was a proper extension of the sunna and Revelation. This human endeavour would be less decisive in fixing the right practice if the Mutazilites were right.

By the time al-Ghazali threw his weight behind the Asharites, the balance in the Sunni world had tilted in their favour. We noted his concern about mixing the authority of mere legal rules with ethical principles; he would fill practical gaps in the Tradition by invoking the higher aims of the sharia to protect the faith, intellect, soul, progeny and property. While al-Shatibi was to take this further in his account of public interest, al-Ghazali's stance was innovative for its time. Yet he was conservative on the role of reason in theology and the law. Human intelligence served (with the aid of divine grace) to take us to Revelation, after which we must cultivate submission. General considerations of public welfare or doing good were not valid grounds for sharia rulings. At the same time, al-Ghazali stressed a strong personal ethics of wisdom and character, a '*fiqh* of the heart'. In the end, his was a synthesis of tradition, rationalism and spirituality that was larger than what his fellow Asharites allowed, but far short of what other thinkers found persuasive if human reason is taken as an active gift of the divine.

A rationalist drive had earlier fed the use of independent reasoning or *ijtihad* among the *madhhabs*; it was shrinking in scope by the 10th century in favour of emulation or *taqlid*, as the empire went through major political and social change. Al-Ghazali added to this conservatism – but it was not shared by the Shia, who were sympathetic to Mutazilite views. They held that reason

and Revelation were fellow travellers, subject to the overarching guidance of the imam. This is clear in works such as *The Comfort of Reason* by Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani (c. 996–1021) and the *Ethics* of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (c. 1201–1274), which built on the writings of the Greek philosophers. Disciplines of character are vital, but Shia thinkers also grappled with the *inherent* nature of acts as ‘good’ or ‘obligatory’, beyond self-interest or the consequences of an act. This was a firm rejection of the Asharite view that reason could not grasp such meanings.

*Ijtihad* was a constant aspect of guidance by the imam and his emissaries, and encouraged on the part of the community. With the establishment of the Jafari *madhhab* in the eighth century, and the vast compilation of hadith by Abu Jafar al-Kulayni (c. 864–941), an Imami Shia pietist rationalism began to thrive. Al-Kirmani and Shaykh al-Mufid (c. 948–1022), who was especially at home among Mutazilite thinkers, are illustrative figures. A practical turn came in the fusion of ethics and law when Qadi al-Numan (c. 903–974) devised the legal code for the governance of the Fatimids in Egypt (969–1171). His work remains to this day an influential guide to conduct within many Ismaili communities. The context in which it emerged was a vibrant culture of learning and cosmopolitanism based in Cairo, much like that of Baghdad under the Abbasids.

A similar setting was to nurture a blistering reply to al-Ghazali’s traditionalism: that of Andalusia, where a *convivencia* of Muslims, Jews and Christians came out of successive regimes whose eighth-century origins went back to the Umayyads of Damascus. The retort came from Ibn Rushd of Cordoba in his 1184 opus, *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, which took direct aim at al-Ghazali’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Not only was it a critique of a traditionalism that Ibn Rushd saw as irrational, but it was also part of a vision that found harmony in philosophical reason and faith. This turned out to be as troubling for Christian thinkers like Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) as it was for the Asharite ethos that now dominated the Muslim world; yet it was to have a decisive impact on the Enlightenment and its rationalist ethics.

## Convergences

That Ibn Rushd was neither a Mutazilite nor a Shia, but a Sunni who saw himself as fully in the Islamic fold, is a reminder of the diversity of ethical teaching. Yet this diversity had vital convergences. Sufi ideas on the nurturing of inner disciplines of mind and character spanned the work of al-Ghazali, al-Tusi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Asharites and Mutazilites, Shia and Sunni, held that reason has limits in what it can ultimately discern of the larger meanings of scripture, which calls for personal openness to the wisdom of divine grace.<sup>15</sup> *Fiqh* as mainly the particulars of law was widely felt to be in tension with its moral underpinnings among jurists well versed in theology. And in *adab* as the pursuit of social and literary aptitudes, the overlap of diverse ethical ideas and practice was rich.

An example of the role of *adab* here comes from a tale spun by another 12th-century Andalusian, Ibn Tufayl, who like Ibn Rushd was a gifted polymath. *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* is his colourful allegory on the ‘awakening’ of a child, Hayy, on an isolated tropical island where he is nurtured by a gazelle and learns survival skills from various animals. As he grows into a man, his astute mind turns to the meaning of life in all its complexity on this lush terrain, his place in it, and the implications for human beings. Alfred Ivry catches the spirit of inquiry thus:

In a charmingly inventive way, Ibn Tufayl describes how Hayy, a propos of investigating the death of the doe that succoured and reared him, is led to think of the species of deer, then of other species, and finally of species, *per se*. Soon he is on to realizing the fundamental conceptual principle of sciences: primary and secondary substances, form and matter, prime matter and the

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<sup>15</sup> See Abdulaziz Sachedina, ‘Islamic Ethics: Differentiations’, in W. Schweiker, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics* (Oxford, 2005), pp.254–67; and Farhad Daftary, ed., *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London, 2000), notably chapters 4 and 9 on ‘rationalism’ and ‘reason’ in context.

elements, and causal efficacy. Working with these principles and using his innate skills of induction and deduction, combined with experiment and observation, Hayy proceeds from the natural sciences to astronomy and metaphysics. At an early stage of his deductions, Hayy is struck by a sense of the unity of being, a unity more significant than all apparent multiplicity and diversity.<sup>16</sup>

Ibn Tufayl artfully imports the ideas of Ibn Sina on the ‘unity of being’ as a way of approaching the nature of the divine, which Hayy finally grasps in terms drawn from the Quran as well as Sufi meditation. Intuition and reason are reconciled with Revelation, and lessons are offered on how we relate to animals and the environment. *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* was to find its way beyond the Muslim world to an appreciative Enlightenment readership and, in all likelihood, inspired Daniel Defoe’s novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

One finds a coming together of ethical stances also in social relations that span commerce and health. To take one example, with the founding of public hospitals in eighth-century Damascus and Baghdad (modelled on the *bimaristan* of Gundishapur in Persia), the first such institutions anywhere, a ‘code’ of propriety or *adab* was needed. Ishaq b. Ali Rahawi, Ali b. Abbas al-Majusi and Zakariya al-Razi were pioneers on this score, building on the Hippocratic oath but taking into account the new setting and the nature of actual encounters between patients and physicians. The rise of medical schools and psychiatric treatment added to the complexity, and the norms of propriety spread with the institutions themselves as far west as Cordoba. Perhaps the largest *bimaristan* was Cairo’s al-Mansur, built in 1285 and visited by the historian al-Maqrizi (c. 1364–1442), who had this to say:

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<sup>16</sup> A. Ivry, ‘The Utilization of Allegory in Islamic Philosophy’, in J. Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Leiden, 2000), p.167; see also L. Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl’s Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale* (Chicago, 1972).

I have found this institution for my equals and for those beneath me, it is intended for rulers and subjects, for soldiers and for the emir, for great and small, freemen and slaves, men and women . . . Every class of patient was accorded separate accommodation: the four halls of the hospital were set apart for those with fever and similar complaints; one part of the building was reserved for eye-patients, one for the wounded, one for those suffering from diarrhoea, one for women; a room for convalescents was divided into two parts, one for men and one for women. Water was laid on to all these departments . . . [E]ven those who were sick at home were supplied with every necessity.<sup>17</sup>

Endowments or *waqfs* came to sponsor the *bimaristan*, where physicians were trained not only in medicine but also in the humanities, often with great expertise in theology and Quranic exegesis. The idea of health as a ‘rational’ concern took wing as the natural sciences thrived in the Abbasid Near East, Fatimid Egypt and Umayyad Andalusia. Equal and free public access to the *bimaristan* was not merely an ideal but a practical reality. This institutional ethos was all but unheard of outside the Muslim world until well into the Middle Ages, when Ibn Sina’s *Canon of Medicine* (1025) also found its way into Latin and Hebrew as the leading text on practice. The values that informed this ethos were the result not of a specific stance in theology or law, but of a broad thrust that crossed such boundaries and went back to the earliest days of Islam.

The crossing of boundaries was, of course, just as true in the encounter with the Byzantine, Hellenic, Indian and Persian traditions – but also with Chinese and sub-Saharan African ones. Their influence thrived in settings like the Silk Road and Timbuktu. Again, this is no less true of sharings with western traditions. On occasion, it is about how ethical problems draw out similar responses across frontiers, such as in the emphasis

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<sup>17</sup> William Osler, *The Evolution Of Modern Medicine* (Whitefish, MT, 2004), pp.73–4; see also Michael H. Morgan, ‘Healers and Hospitals’, in *Lost History* (Washington, DC, 2007), pp.179–218.

on intention in the work of al-Tusi and later in that of Immanuel Kant (1724–1802). In this vein, dialogue ensues in sorting through the overlapping ways of seeing the human condition.

## This Companion

Like the allegory of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, the classical ‘health code’ was both universal in its leanings and distinctive in its moral well-springs. Much the same is true of values that emerged directly from the debates surveyed above. Charitable giving, for example, was shared with the Judeo-Christian ethos but took an Islamic turn in being reconceived as part of an ethic of care. How did such ‘roots and branches’ carry Muslim ethics into the modern period – and what are the specific ideas and actions that still matter the most? Where has practice fallen short of ideals and what should we do about such deficits?

The ten chapters that follow take up these queries from a variety of stances. They share the conviction that there is far more to the picture than ‘following rules’, and that Muslims have long striven to sort through what the ‘good’ actually means. Back in the 14th century Ibn Khaldun felt that ‘social organisation’ was less about law and order than the moral vision of how a society is to be governed. Ethics had made the leap from the virtues of the individual and community to those of the state. It began four centuries earlier with al-Farabi’s ‘virtuous city’, whose mix of ‘statecraft with soul craft’ is, for Charles Butterworth in this volume, the trunk linking the roots and branches. Sacred and secular, *din* and *duniya*, were to find unity in a train of thought which ripened in the rationalism of Ibn Rushd. Butterworth sees the retrieval of this teaching as vital today not only for Muslims but also for a ‘Western rationalism’ alienated from faith.

Such alienation, for Seyyed Hossein Nasr, covers the larger interplay of tradition and modernity. The price is paid in a domain of ethics which grips our attention today: the environment. Nasr’s chapter shows that a ‘theology of nature’ in which humans are an integral part of their environment is central to Islamic thought, building on rich Quranic and hadith evocations of nature as sacred.



The sharia upholds the vision in numerous principles on water, soil and forests, favouring a lifestyle that leaves a 'light footprint'. Medicine, astronomy and physics in the classical age held a worldview that was at the opposite end of the 'conquest of nature' stance which ushered in western modernity. Towns and cities that cherished green spaces, waterways and sensitive animal husbandry gave way to an urban modernity more disturbing in much of the Muslim world than the West. Nasr calls on activists, scholars and *ulama* to spur an ecological sensitivity that isn't simply about 'outward effects, but also its spiritual and religious dimensions'.

The appeal to 'tradition' here is not only about scripture, sharia and philosophy. Nasr and Eric Ormsby take up the dense webs of literary *adab* from poetry to storytelling that offer ethical lessons in unique ways, with themes ranging from the treatment of animals and fellow humans to the nature of just governance. Ormsby marvels at how effective Muslims were in retelling Indian, Greek and Persian tales and making them utterly their own. *The 1001 Nights*, *Kalila wa Dimna* and the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* are among the best known in a vast repertory where entertainment and ethics are interwoven. In the hands of a wandering scholar like Nasir-i Khusraw, a tale overtly directed at the narrator himself is a potent tool of advice to people high and low. His lessons about an awakened intellect speak of how he strove to 'change the state of things', taking full responsibility for his acts in giving the advice: 'You are the author of your own disastrous star; don't look up to heaven for some luckier star.'

Often, like Shahrazade in *The 1001 Nights*, the narrator was female; in earlier days, the authenticity of hadith reports was attested by Aisha, the Prophet's wife, while Zaynab defiantly kept alive the record of her brother Hussein's martyrdom in Shia tradition. But women generally were to become less valued as public actors, and Zayn Kassam recounts the cost of this erosion in matters of law and social ethics. Perhaps more than in any other encounter between culture and faith, the ethics of gender exemplifies how much the reading of scripture – and thence the making of law and tradition – is framed by context. Kassam singles out two sets of practices that bring to the fore the tyranny of patriarchy: 'honour'

crimes and female genital mutilation (FGM). Like other forms of gender violence, they are accounted for by social factors which distort the values they claim to uphold. Kassam shows how Muslim women activists, religious and secular, have used 'ethical resources that range from scriptural texts to networks of solidarity' in garnering legitimacy to face down the offenders.<sup>18</sup>

An underlying issue that pervades many other themes explored in this volume is the separation of public and private. This affects, for example, how honour and sexuality are cast in relation to women in the practices discussed by Kassam (and not just among Muslims). Many aspects of the sharia reflect a concern with 'publicness', from modesty in attire and display to monitoring of conduct in the marketplace. Fahmida Suleman's chapter offers a vivid illustration of this: religious spaces came to be subjected to strict rules of display in which figural art was improper and calligraphy triumphed. This extended to other expressions of public art, including painting and sculpture – but as noted earlier, not in all Muslim societies and historical periods. As in attitudes toward women, cultural context was vital in how propriety was understood.

Appreciating the role of culture is also critical in other fields. Mediation of disputes about property and matrimonial relations – the subject of Mohamed Keshavjee's chapter – requires skill in parsing perception and reality on what 'Islam' prefers. *Sulh* or the amicable resolution of disputes outside the formal bounds of law enjoys high esteem in the Quran, both in private and public matters (4:35, 4:58). Ethical values are tested as material interests clash with the enjoining of equity and generosity. As globalisation brings diverse Muslim and non-Muslim cultures into daily contact, Keshavjee finds that a 'pluralist ethics' sensitive to difference may well provide solutions that more rigid laws cannot. This view is shared in Rodney Wilson's discussion of economic ethics, from

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<sup>18</sup> An outstanding example is the Yemen Women's Union, founded in 1974, with a record of providing an ethical critique of public policy in areas from FGM and child marriage to female literacy and poverty reduction: <http://www.yemeniwomenunion.org/en/index.htm>

‘sharia finance’ to strategies of development. Public welfare is a key facet of the sharia’s view of social relations or *muamalat*: with *zakat* and *waqfs* there are arrangements for lending and entrepreneurship that seek to be non-exploitative. Traditionally, *fiqh* has been guided by these tenets. The recent global crisis in public finance, notes Wilson, has energised for Muslims an already ‘strong interest in altruism in economic behaviour, in the wider context of proper motivation for economic choices’.

Public–private considerations play a lively role in health care too. We saw earlier that a shared duty of care for the health of the community has had a critical place in Islam, from the rise of public medicine to the evolution of the *bimaristan* and the role here of *waqfs*. What this means in practice, as Abdallah Daar and Ahmed al-Khitamy show in their chapter, is that public health care must take into account expectations of propriety that might elsewhere be deemed private. For example, dietary rules and rituals of cleanliness and prayer run across the public–private divide in what Muslim patients may expect of themselves and their caregivers. Then there are choices, in areas such as abortion and euthanasia, where teachings can vary among Muslims despite a shared reverence for life and wellbeing. In all these matters, individual wellbeing and autonomy need to be balanced against wider considerations of the public good. Daar and al-Khitamy call attention to the 2005 Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, which urges ‘moral sensitivity and ethical reflection’ in aiming at ‘pluralistic dialogue about bioethical issues between all stakeholders’. Muslim states were full participants in the making of the Declaration, and their stake in the emerging guidelines is obvious.<sup>19</sup>

In public health, as in economics and conflict resolution, secular and religious ethics are closely tied; professional codes of practice often have roots in religious tenets. Yet a secular basis is commonly felt to be the ‘modern’ way to an inclusive approach, especially in

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<sup>19</sup> See Henk Have and Michèle Jean, eds., *The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights: Background, Principles and Application* (Paris, 2009).

pluralist settings. Modernity itself is generally felt to be a journey away from limiting traditions. Reza Shah-Kazemi's chapter on tolerance tests the integrity of that view. The cherished basis of modern tolerance in 17th-century European liberalism has deep links to an Ottoman ethos, which in turn has Andalusian, Fatimid and other antecedents. The idea that minority rights were first enshrined in European codes ignores a long record of legal protection in the Muslim world (and other civilisations). Further, notes Shah-Kazemi, frameworks that favour 'putting up' with diversity leave out any real empathy or engagement with the Other. Yet this is what marks the 'expansive vision' that is found in the Quran, one which Muslims have struggled to lived up to. Shah-Kazemi, like Ramin Jahanbegloo in his chapter on nonviolence, is well aware that contemporary Muslim societies have fallen far short of these teachings. But, they both argue, it is in the teachings rather than just secular codes that pluralist engagement is best grounded.

In the wake of 11 September 2001, Muslim exemplars of an ethics of nonviolence – such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Mahmoud Taha, Khan Ghaffar Khan and Fethullah Gülen – recall the vitality of progressive traditions. 'It is important to resist the claim', argues Jahanbegloo, 'that civil and political modernity depend on the primacy of secular reason over Muslim narratives.' That would mean stripping away ethical attachments and solidarities which give meaning to identity; without them, humans seem to do a poor job of steering through modernity. The attachments and solidarities are what this *Companion* aims to address. They are essential to our encounter with issues of ecology and climate change, genetic therapies and care of the aged, extreme inequality and responsible governance, gender equity and political violence, access to quality education and information technology. We invest in the 'rule of law' our aspirations on how key public and private values are protected, and understandably so. But an account of the good must reach beyond utilitarian codes and arrangements. A globalised world calls for an 'ethical sensibility that can be shared across denominational lines and foster a universal moral

outlook.<sup>20</sup> For Muslims, this is about ends and means, intention and results, with accountability to and beyond the here and now.

## Further Reading

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<sup>20</sup> His Highness the Aga Khan, Remarks at Symposium on Cosmopolitan Society, Evora University, Portugal, 12 February 2006, in his *Where Hope Takes Root* (Berkeley and Toronto, 2008), pp.101–11.